The Bourbon News.

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A KNIGHT OF 1901

By WILLIAM BLOSS.

ALONG about the middle of that series of school "readers" which was most used a generation ago—it may have been the "third," or it may have been the "fourth" reader—was one which, among other classic selections, contained the account in verse of how, when the queen of the medieval fete had bantered Lord Francis to chase after the glove she had wantonly thrown into the arena among a ferocious collection of man-eating lions, the active and astute Lord Francis "lightly leaped" down to the arena sands, deftly snatched up the lady's glove before the astonished lions could figure out what he was up to, climbed nimbly back to his seat by the fair lady's side, and then—good Lord Francis!—threw the glove, slap bang, right in the lady's face.

"Not love," quoth he, "but vanity, prompted such a deed as this."

The poet fails to inform us upon the point, but one can imagine that after this there were no wedding bans for the fair ladye and Lord Francis, who was the catch of the season, and that she was exceeding sore about it, and repented her folly at leisure.

There may be different mental attitudes regarding the propriety of this tempestuous conduct of Lord Francis, some, no doubt, contending that no true gentleman would under any stress of irritating circumstances return to a lady her glove by throwing it sharply into her face, and that this breach of decorum at once stamped the knight as a boorish-mannered and racous-minded person, whose name should be stricken from the blue book of his day; but it appears to be a majority point of view that the lady was served exactly as she deserved, and that if she went unmarried to the end of her days she received only such measure as she meted. And strangely enough, it is the ladies themselves who most ardently uphold this latter view of the case.

In the midsummer of this first year of our newest century, the big city of Chicago, stirred by the public spirit of a generous citizen, discovered in suddenness what had been a readily apparent fact for three whole generations—that its far-stretching shore of sandy beach and cooling water was a heritage of the people, and had not been designed by nature as a riparian asset for land-grabbing corporations or an easy dumping spot for the refuse of contractors. Accordingly, private means having furnished the equipments of which the civic purse had denied, or never thought of, there were established all along the shore, from the mouth of the sedgy Calumet to far Lake View, public bathing beaches, provided with convenient dressing-rooms, with soap and towels and bathing suits, free for the uses of all who came, with life lines and floating rafts upon which the bathers could disport, and, above all, with expert attendants to teach the art of swimming and to be at touch in any moment of peril which might unhappily overtake the inexperienced or the venturesome. The waters of Lake Michigan are cold, and only when an east wind rolls its sun-heated surface in upon the shallows of the western shore is it really adapted for pleasure bathing.

Public appreciation of this newfound luxury—and tacit condemnation of the civic stupidity which had so long denied it to the people, its real owners—was evidenced at once in the vast popularity these free bathing beaches leaped into in an instant and continued to hold until the nipping air of fall rendered undress disporting on the sands no longer a pastime and a joy. Hundreds of thousands of visitors, the records show, partook of their advantages during the brief season.

It was at the most frequented of all these beaches so opened to public use that young Elmer Armstrong, a university matriculant, whose legacy had been a stout heart and ambition to rise, a strong body and the hardy constitution bequeathed by sturdy forbears, a pure mind and intrepid resolution. He had, besides, a widow's blessing and a couple of hundred dollars he had earned as an amateur life saver before he became a freshman at 19.

Not much, you will say, when it must be reckoned that this was absolutely all he had in the world, beyond the dear memory of how his mother had loved him, and had toiled long that he might go through the high school. Well, there are those worse equipped, many men whose white hairs speak of that wisdom whose seed are trial and experience would prefer Elmer Armstrong's capital of youth and courage and hope and loyalty to two hundred times two hundred dollars in the bank, without those things. It wasn't the pawnbrokers, but the youth who were swift and strong, whom the ancients crowned with laurel.

And Elmer Armstrong passed a useful and a prosperous and a sunlit summer. Useful because his swift daring in the water served to bring safely ashore many foolish swimmers who were overtaken by cramp in deep water, and many unaccustomed bathers who lost their balance and their heads when the wind blew tempestuous breakers out of the east, and made a dangerous undertow when the wild waves sought hurriedly to retreat, astonished, from the shore to the depths which had borne them; prosperous because he was well paid, and twice or thrice had been given substantial rewards by different relatives whose children he had brought ashore from grave danger in the treacherous surf; sunlit, because Elmer was in love.

When a youth not yet of 20 years falls in love with an earth-born goddess of 18, and when his passion seems to find response and the jaundiced fangs of doubt and jealousy find no lodgment in his buoyant breast, then to be in love is to have all places temples, all seasons summer. Sleeping, he dreams of songs. Waking, his unconscious consciousness basks in a perpetual glory whose beams engulf one central shrine wherein She is the hallowed saint. Then to live, to be, to feel, to know that one loves, to believe one is beloved, to endure heart-piercing raptures, to laugh at pains, to woo, to part, to meet again—a daily tempest, a mighty prayer. Oh, laughing little god, whom kingly poets and poet kings have crowned, well did those who knew thee first perceive that thou wert blind.

Why it was Celeste the one only girl in all the world for the young life guardian is hardly clear to those who saw the bourgeoning, the bud, the blossom, of this waterside romance. True enough, she was sufficiently fair. Her lips were red, her black eyes very bright, her white little teeth quite regular. Her supple young body was ravishing in its maiden glories of rounded elasticity and glowing tints, not even the envious screen of her modest bathing dress could conceal this fact—but, well, one shouldn't be captious where so much else was charming altogether. Her girl friends said Celeste was vain, for one thing. For another, they whispered among themselves that she was a spiteful little she cat who cared only for Celeste and none other.

There, you bore. Go to one's neighbors to find out the truth. For my part, I merely have concluded that Celeste has no soul. But that is the veriest speculation. One should be rational, and even fair, regarding one's dislikes.

However it may be, when he had met Celeste Elmer fell so deep into the well of love that he would like to have drowned there. Nor is this any metaphor of speech.

She came almost every day, after the first. The young guardian of the beach, a giant with blue eyes and yellow hair, an Antinous in naked calves and arms, taught the fairest of all his visitors the gentle art of floating, the strenuous rush and swirl of the overhand stroke, the restful, evenhanded, tireless progression of the breast stroke. She took to the water like a duck. After a month the pupil bid fair to overtake the master's skill.

She came first with her parents, and a younger brother or two, graceless brats, canal bred, who had known how to swim at birth, and who took deep joy in splashing cold lake water upon the timid and shivering Celeste at her first venture. After a time the elder people came no more. They made Elmer's acquaintance and had confidence in him. They saw at one keen glance the strength in his great frame, the honor in his clear blue eyes. To such as he it is good to commit children, even young girls. After a time, too, the brats also stayed away when they thought it was the hour for Celeste. You see, when she had learned no longer to fear the water, and had become mistress of a bold stroke or two, she revenged herself most thoroughly for the early splashing the brats had given her, and ducked them in deep water most unmercifully, until they were half strangled. Which fable teaches—much. There's a meaty kernel in most fables, if one can crack the shell.

Celeste and Elmer used to swim together a great deal, when the crowds were gone, or had not come, for often she sought the shore at sunrise, after they were engaged—she was a decorous girl, in most ways, and duly reared—and they had glorious long distance excursions in company, into deep water. Elmer insisted always upon having a boat along when she was with him, out of extra care for his treasure, he said; one never knew what might happen in Lake Michigan. Did I tell you, no. It was in the water that first he told her his love, his worship, of how he hoped to make her his wife and helpmate, and of what great prizes he would aim at and struggle upward to, if she would join him in the dear battle of life. And whether then she loved, or no, or thought she, or liked his manliness, his prowess, his rare blue eyes and noble forehead beneath the tangled mat of yellow hair, she said yes, and put her arm about his neck and kissed him many times.

After that it was understood. There were no objections. "Wait a little," said Celeste's father. "Both of you are very young. Elmer must get on a little yet. Be happy, but wait, my children." Celeste's father had quite a stock of sense.

One night, under the full moon, Elmer and Celeste were the center of a select party of belated bathers. The workaday crowd had long been homeward bound. Sportive challenges flew back and forth among the swimmers.

"Celeste and I together can beat any one of you to the government brakewater," cried Elmer, proudly. Most of those he addressed were his most proficient pupils, the best swimmers on the beach.

"Done, for supper for all," the challenged ones retorted. "Those who tire can get in the boat and help row." There were two capacious yawls at hand, and the race was arranged. Six swimmers entered the water. Four others pulled the two boats in their wake. The waters grew cold out in the lake. To the brakewater it was a mile and a half from the beach. Before it was reached all but two of the swimmers called to be helped into the welcome boats. By main strength Elmer supported the shivering Celeste until they had reached their goal. Then they climbed up into the warm, summer air panting. She was nearly exhausted.

"Even Elmer's tired out," said one of the losers. No wonder we couldn't make it."

"Pooh," sniffed Celeste. "It's nothing. He could swim back again, now."

"I shouldn't care to try, in that ice water," laughed Elmer.

"I know you could," persisted the girl. Then, as her lover only shook his head, her face changed strangely.

"Never have I asked you any real favor, before," said the girl. "I want you to swim back to prove that I am right. Won't you? You don't love me. I won't marry you, Elmer Armstrong, unless you swim back, this minute.

There was no answer but the chug a diver from a height makes as his body pierces the water. Elmer was swimming strongly for shore, and was rods away before his surprised companions could huddle into their boats, seize their oars and set after him.

He went on strongly, bravely, until near shore. Then he sank, without a word. When he came up he waved away the eager aid into the nearest boat which waiting hands held out to him.

"Get in, get in, Elmer," they cried, "you have done enough. Only Celeste was mute.

The swimmer lay upon his back a few minutes, curtly saying he would be all right in a moment. He wanted no help. Then he slowly swam the short distance to the deserted beach.

As he rose from the water the boats grounded beside. Celeste laughed merrily.

"I knew he would do it, if I asked him," she shrilled exultantly.

Then she held out her arms to him, that he might help her from her seat to shore.

Elmer bent slowly over the boat side, looking keenly at her face. Something she never had read in the depths of his blue eyes made the girl turn pale. As she started back from him, the man slowly stooped, filled his great palm with water, and flung it scornfully in her face.

GOOD LITTLE WILLIE.

Teacher—Now, Willie, you may tell those bad little boys why you didn't go swimming with them last Sunday.

Willie—Well, you see, the melons wuz ripe at old man Gaynor's, an' he don't keep no dog.

A Tramp-Proof Name.

Bath (Me.) is reported to be having a business boom. Bath is lucky in another way, remarks the Chicago Record-Herald. Tramps will never go near the place.

More Distressing.

Mrs. Day—Did I understand you to say your husband had no vocation?

Mrs. Gay (the minister's wife)—Worse than that! I said he had no vacation.—Philadelphia Press.

FUNNY FOLKS

Getting the Facts.

"How far is it to the next town, my friend?"

"It's a right smart piece."

"How many miles?"

"Hain't never counted 'em."

"Well, how many yards, then?"

"Well, they's my yard, an' Neighbor Jones' yard, an' the Widder Scott's yard, and—"

"Nonsense! How much ground will I have to cover between here and there?"

"Well, they use to call it ten acre or so, but it's my opinion its ten an' a half!"—Atlanta Constitution.

A Genuine Pleasure.

A couple were getting married, and the man who was acting as "father" was an extremely fussy person. When the question was asked, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" to the amusement of both the clergyman and the congregation this gentleman stepped forward and said: "I have very much pleasure in doing so."—Tit-Bits.

Hustlers.

Si Pumpkinduster—They tell me thet when a city feller proposes tew a city gal she always says: "Oh, this is so sudden!"

Abe Geehaw—Well, thet's only natural. Why, them city fellers don't think nothin' of proposin' tew a gal thet they've only kept company with for three or four years.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Handy to Have Around.

She—You won't object to having my dear mamma live with us after we are married, will you?

He (a young physician)—Not at all. In fact, she'll be most welcome.

"I'm so glad you feel that way."

"Yes; you see, she is always ailing, and I really need somebody to experiment on."—N. Y. Weekly.

Astute Alice.

There was a young lady named Alice.
She lived down in Texas, near Dalice.
She married an earl,
Did this clever young gearl,
And now she is boss of his palice.
—Baltimore American.

QUITE SO.

Miss White—Is that charming Mrs. Gray unmarried?

Miss Black—Yes. She was unmarried for the third time last week.—Chicago Daily News.

The Casual Observer.

This old world has some curious ways.
You watch with eager eye,
And don't know if you ought to laugh
Or if you ought to cry.
—Washington Star.

Very Suspicious.

Friend—Why, Elvira, what's the matter?

Elvira—Oh, I don't know, only I'm worried to death. I've had the same girl six weeks, and she doesn't talk about leaving yet.

"She doesn't?"

"No; not a word. She must be in love with my husband."—N. Y. Weekly.

Her Real Preferences.

Mabel—Here's a writer on health who says we mustn't eat pickles at all.

Irene—O, well. I don't really care for them. If I can have all the chalk and all the slate pencils I want I don't care if I never see a pickle.—Chicago Tribune.

Couldn't Be Done.

Lady (in dress with long train)—I wish my portrait taken.

Photographer — Take this seat, madam.

"Oh, but I want it full-length."

"Hum! Very sorry, madam, but my panoramic camera is out of order."—N. Y. Weekly.

Method in Her Madness.

Dashaway—Last night I experienced a novel sensation. Miss Twilling invited me out to dinner as her guest, and insisted on ordering and paying for everything. I wonder what she did it for?

Cleverton—She probably wanted something to eat.—Harlem Life.

Only Half a Trial.

Purchaser (angrily)—You told me this horse could go with the speed of the wind. It was all I could do to get into town before noon.

Dealer—He ain't had no fair show yit. Wait till ye turn him home'ard. Goin' home he's greased lightnin!'—N. Y. Weekly.

The Polite Young Man.

"Yes," said the haughty young woman who was a Colonial Dame as well as a Daughter of the Revolution, "my great-great-grandsire fell at Bunker Hill."

"Ice or banana skin?" inquired the polite young man from Milwaukee.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Duplicity.

"I don't understand how Ethel Mothwing ever got engaged to such a steady, matter-of-fact young man," said one girl.

"It was easily managed," answered the other. "She got a cook book, took the covers off and inserted the paper-back novel she happened to be reading. The silly fellow thought she was going to make a wonderful housewife."—Washington Star.

Judging.

Oh, I despise the fool who thinks
That only money makes the man—
And yet how pleasant it would be
If men had cause for judging me
Upon that foolish plan.
—Chicago Record-Herald.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

"Hubby, dear, you must buy a new hat."

"But I don't need one."

"O, yes, you do. I ordered one for myself to-day."—Heitere Welt.

Once Again.

"Where are you going, my pretty maid?
"I'm going milking, sir," she said.
"May I go along?" he asked of her.
"There's one calf there already, sir."
—Chicago Daily News.

Force of Habit.

"Have you no regret?" we asked of the druggist who had served arsenic instead of quinine.

"No," he replied, "but I have something just as good."

However, he well knew that we expected him to say this, else why would we have written the first question?—Baltimore American.

Quite Speedy.

Elder Passnips—My boy writes home that your son Jack isn't getting along very fast at college.

Deacon Oldham—Don't you believe what your boy's tellin' you, elder. Jack's goin' through fast enough. He runs away ahead of his allowance every month.—Chicago Record-Herald.

As It Seemed to Bridget.

Mrs. Frills—Now that I have engaged you, Bridget, I am going to begin right away to give you a little training in the art of waiting on guests. You see, my daughter is coming out next month—

Bridget—Indade, mum! An' how long was she sint up for?—Richmond Dispatch.

Pity.

A sage looked past the bars one day
Upon a fol and sighed,
And murmured, as he turned away:
Alas! if in his infancy
He only could have died!"
The fool gazed at the sage as he
Retreated from the place,
And said: "I wouldn't care to be
Alive if God had given me
That poor old fellow's face."
—Chicago Record-Herald.

PAID FOR IN FULL.

"How much did yer pay for the watch, Bill?"

"Six bloomin' months."—The King.

Salt of the Earth.

One advantage had old man Lot
In this world of trouble and strife;
When in after years he got fresh
He could go home and lick his wife.
—Chicago Daily News.

Why She Liked Them.

After three-year-old Frances' little guests had departed, her mamma asked:

"Frances, do you like little girls to visit you?"

"Yes'm; I like little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."—Harlem Life.

What It Is That Comes.

"Do you believe that all things come to him who waits?"

"No," answered the hustler, decisively. "Pretty nearly everything that a man doesn't want comes to him who waits, but the things worth having come to him who gets up and humps himself."—Chicago Post.

A Cinch Game.

Mrs. Waggles—I met the doctor today and told him about your malaria. He said you were to take some whisky every time you had the chills.

Waggles—All right, my dear. I'll shake for the drinks.—Judge.